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Human Development Report

Update on *Human Development Report* preparations and consultations

1. Preparation of the global *Human Development Report* is guided by General Assembly resolution 57/264, which reaffirmed the Report's editorial independence as well as the importance of consultations with Member States. The resolution also invited the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board to include a separate agenda item on the *Human Development Report* in its annual workplan, and Executive Board decision 2011/12 calls on UNDP and the Human Development Report Office to "ensure full implementation" of the General Assembly resolution, including by taking steps to "further improve the consultation process . . . in an inclusive and transparent manner."

2. This briefing note for the 2011 annual session of the UNDP Executive Board describes the key findings of the 2010 *Human Development Report*, the global reception of the Report and plans for the 2011 Report. In light of recent discussions with Member States, the note pays particular attention to enhanced efforts to strengthen dialogue with Member States, particularly with respect to statistical aspects of the Report. A description of the 2011 *Human Development Report* consultation process and initial findings is also provided. The oral report of the Administrator to the Executive Board in June 2011 will provide further updates on the measures taken by UNDP and the Development Report Office to ensure implementation of 57/264 and of corresponding Board decisions.

The 2010 *Human Development Report*

3. The 2010 Report, the twentieth in the series, analysed global progress in human development over the past 40 years. It documented enormous improvements that have been made around the world as evidenced by the higher Human Development Index (HDI) scores of most countries. However, the variation among countries is striking: The lowest-performing 25 per cent experienced less than a 20 per cent improvement in HDI performance, while the top-performing group averaged gains of more than 50 per cent. Yet as a group, the quartile of countries at the bottom of the HDI scale in 1970 improved even faster than those then at the top, with an average gain of 61 per cent. The diverse national pathways to development firmly show that there is no single formula for sustainable progress. Among the 10 top performers in

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terms of rate of progress, advances in health and education most often drove their overall performance.

4. Following consultation with human-development measurement experts associated with the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative and the University of Gottingen, the 2010 Report introduced a revised methodology and indicators for the HDI. The objective was to ensure the Report's continued relevance and to capture the significance for human development of achieving balanced progress in all three dimensions of the index (longevity, education and standard of living). The Report also introduced a series of innovative measurements for multidimensional poverty, gender disparities and inequality (Inequality-adjusted HDI, Gender Inequality Index and Multidimensional Poverty Index). These replaced earlier gender and poverty indices on an experimental basis. These innovations were made possible by increases in the amount of data available internationally and progress in statistical methods. They reflected new insights and sought to address concerns with earlier indices. The Report discussed these innovations at length.

5. The 2010 Report also looked at aspects of human development that are not captured by the indices, such as civic engagement and opportunities for people to be heard on issues affecting their lives. It concluded that the lack of sustainability, and of equity and empowerment, threaten countries' abilities to continue to make progress on human development.

Launch and reception

6. The United Nations Secretary-General and the UNDP Administrator launched the twentieth anniversary *Human Development Report* at the United Nations on 4 November 2010. Subsequently, the Report was presented and discussed at regional and national events with the active participation of heads of State and other senior officials in more than 100 countries. There were international symposiums — among others, one hosted by the European Union in Brussels and one hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris. The report was also the focus of several major international academic conferences, including meetings of the International Society of Quality-of-Life Studies in Bangkok and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association, in Medellin.

7. The 2010 Report was covered extensively by print and electronic media worldwide — to a much greater extent than any other recent *Human Development Report*. By mid-December, the 2010 Report had been spotlighted in more than 2,000 newspaper articles, articles appearing in almost every country in the world, and it had been the subject of programs broadcast by the leading global news broadcasters. The 2010 Report and its Index were also discussed in nearly 4,000 separate blog reports, in all the major languages and from all the major regions. This coverage came on top of a record 4.4 million page views of the Report website (http://hdr.undp.org/en/), and more than 300,000 downloads of the Report in PDF format. Online discussions of the Report and its indices continue in the Report's blog: "Let's Talk Human Development" (http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev/lets-talk-hd/). Academic citations of the Report tracked by Google Scholar show that the *Human Development Report* now surpasses the World Bank's *World Development Report* in the number of international scholarly references made to it.

8. The Report also continued to receive widespread endorsement from scholars and policy experts, and in the major media. For example, Gregg Easterbrook in *The New Republic* referred to the Report as "one of the world's most significant documents," and Dani Rodrik of Harvard said the Report "substantially enriches our understanding of the development landscape."

Post-release discussion on the consultative process

9. At the first regular session 2011 of the Executive Board, held from 31 January to 3 February 2011, there was debate regarding the extent to which Member States had been consulted in the course of the preparation of the 2010 *Human Development Report*. Board decision 2011/12 called upon the Human Development Report Office "to further improve the consultation

process with Member States . . . in an inclusive and transparent manner". The concluding paragraph spoke of improving the Report's "quality and accuracy, as well as preserving its credibility and impartiality, without compromising its editorial independence".

10. The human development indices, indicators and data were subject to further debate and discussion on the occasion of the triennial report by the Human Development Report Office to the United Nations Statistical Commission at its forty-second session, held 23 to 24 February 2011. The Human Development Report Office was requested to report back to the Commission within three months on the issues raised in the decision: e.g., the use of unofficial data, lack of consultations with national statistical offices, and data discrepancies between the Report and data available from national sources.

Actions to address concerns and increase consultation

11. Seeking to address the concerns expressed in the decisions of the UNDP Executive Board and the Statistical Commission, the Human Development Report Office has taken the following steps to get more feedback and expert input, and to enhance the transparency of its work:

(i) *Reactivated the Statistical Advisory Panel,* as recommended by the Expert Group on the Human Development Index. This action is intended to facilitate early and full consultations with the official statistical community during the preparation of the 2011 and subsequent *Human Development Reports*. A majority of the Panel members are drawn from the official statistical community, and a majority are from developing countries. The issues concerning the 2011 Report that are to be considered include: how to respond in cases where official data is lacking; the use of non-official national data; and the implications for the Report of the 1994 Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the 2005 Principles Governing International Statistical Activities.[1] The Panel complements the ongoing dialogue with the Expert Group, which represents Member States and reports back to the Statistical Commission.

(ii) *Liaised with national statistical offices and international data providers* to enhance transparency and to ensure that Human Development Index calculations make the widest possible use of internationally recognized comparable data. In February a meeting was organized with Statistical Commission delegates from countries not included in the 2010 Index and with statistical advisers from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Caribbean Community, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss ways to ensure that relevant international data are channelled to the Human Development Report Office. The Office is also working with the Small Island Developing States Unit of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in order to obtain indicators for small island countries. These countries' indicators are the most often affected by data gaps in international data series. In March the Office formally contacted national statistics offices in a parallel process, through the United Nations Statistics Division and the permanent missions to the United Nations. These national offices were advised about the international data sources that would be used to calculate the Human Development Index and related indices slated to appear in the 2011 Report. This dual communication included a calendar for the preparatory phases of the Report. The calendar included deadlines for when international data would be obtained

[1] For copies of these documents, see:

- http://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/fundprinciples.aspx (Fundamental Principles); and
- http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/statorg/Principles_stat_activities/principles_stat_activities.htm (Principles).

from the source agencies. As requested, a report was also submitted the Statistical Commission to describe the steps that were being taken in response to its decision 10.

(iii) *Expanded consultations with experts, policymakers and civil leaders on the 2011 Report.* The Human Development Report Office has pursued additional opportunities to consult on the upcoming Report with a range of stakeholders, experts and interested officials. A complete list of the consultations that have occurred or have been planned to date is provided in the Annex below, and further information is available at http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/ and is provided to Member States at informal briefings. Reviewing here, this consultation programme includes:

(a) Meetings drawing in regional representation in Bamako and Ljubljana, as well as meetings in Brasilia, Beijing, New Delhi, Quito and San Jose which have been planned in conjunction with country offices and regional centres.

(b) Brainstorming sessions at academic institutions, including at the London School of Economics, the Dubai School of Government, and the Institute of the Environment at the University of California at Berkeley.

(c) A Bonn meeting (December 2010) of scholars and policymakers which was hosted by the United Nations Association of Germany in conjunction with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as proposed subregional reviews slated to be hosted by the Governments of Denmark and Japan.

(d) Consultation opportunities at the upcoming Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Istanbul, and in conjunction with the annual meeting of the UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee.

(e) Meetings with statisticians from the United Nations regional commissions (ECLAC and the Economic Commission for Europe), at Eurostat and in Qatar and Kigali, as well as participation in the meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities and the 58th World Statistics Congress of the International Statistical Institute.

12. In addition, the Report Office asked the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative to organize its biennial, two-week human development course around the theme of human development measurement. The course took place in March 2011 and brought together 43 policymakers, UNDP staff and experts representing 32 developing countries. The course introduced participants to the development, calculation and analysis of the new indices, and to other changes introduced in the 2010 Report. The course also provided an occasion to test guidance materials on the revised and new indices. These will be used in the preparation of regional and national human development reports.

13. Following previous years' procedures, but also augmenting them, a series of informal consultations with Executive Board members have been scheduled. These meetings are offering valuable opportunities to review the efforts under way to strengthen dialogue with Member States and the progress in resolving critical data gaps, and to discuss technical decisions that are shaping the preparation of the upcoming report. The first of these meetings took place in January 2011. At these informal consultations with the full Board, the Director of the Human Development Report Office presented the theme for the 2011 Report and outlined the Report preparation process. There were also extensive discussions of the 2010 process. A second meeting in March 2011 focused exclusively on the upcoming report, highlighting the analysis behind its chosen theme, emerging patterns and trends, and basic questions the 2011 Report will be seeking to answer. In April and May there will be further consultations with the regional groups of the Board to deepen the dialogue and consider region-specific feedback and initiatives. The Office has also been encouraging representatives of United Nations permanent missions and capitals to meet with Office staff either regarding the theme and broad outlines of the upcoming Report, or to discuss more specific statistical concerns.

14. As in previous years, the Human Development Report Office will also be receiving valuable input from other expert bodies, academics, United Nations and permanent mission staff, and indeed from interested individual citizens around the world. Activities to highlight in this regard include:

(i) Coordinating with the Energy and Environment Group of the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, and keeping abreast of the sustainability-related analyses taking place in advance of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012. The Report Office also remains in close contact with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and is participating in the reviews of that Department's World Economic and Social Survey 2011. The Office is also in contact with the team supporting the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability. In addition, the Office has had meetings with the United Nations Environment Programme and the OECD, and will organize a review of a draft of the 2011 *Human Development Report* with United Nations agencies in Geneva in May.

(ii) Consulting with the Academic Advisory Panel with expertise in areas of human development, sustainability and data use. This panel has met twice and provides ongoing virtual reviews and advice to the Human Development Report Office.

(iii) The UNDP readers' group, representing all the regional bureaux and different practice areas, has also been discussing the Report at key points in the process, and has helped by distilling regionally relevant recommendations and messages. A seminar series, started in 2009, provides regular opportunities to discuss topical issues related to sustainability and equity with UNDP staff, permanent missions and other stakeholders in the New York area.

(iv) Broader discussions have taken place on the Human Development Resource Network (HDRNet), through the "Let's Talk Human Development" blog and on the *Human Development Report* Facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/HumanDevelopmentReport). In addition, the Report Office has more than 13,000 e-mail subscribers, who are sent regular updates about background papers, blog updates and consultation announcements, as well as when new materials are posted on the Report website.

The 2011 *Human Development Report*

15. As noted above, the 2010 Report concluded that the lack of sustainability, and of equity and empowerment, threatened countries' abilities to make progress on human development. This is in line with a conclusion reached in the first years of work on the *Human Development Report*: Sustainability is central to human development. For example: If the historical rates of progress experienced over the past four decades can indeed be sustained, by 2050 three quarters of the people in the world could be living in countries with a Human Development Index (HDI) similar to that of developed countries today.

16. That is the positive side of the coin. On the negative side, it is clear that such a level of sustainability is threatened by the overuse and degradation of critical environmental resources, by intergenerational and intragenerational inequity and by what in years past was called the "limits to growth". For much of the past several centuries technical progress outstripped the constraints imposed by the finiteness of global natural resources, but there is considerable uncertainty today as to the capacity of further technological innovations to easily solve our future problems and to maintain the previous levels of growth in productivity. There are also good reasons to believe that increases in inequality and in environmental unsustainability may be causally interrelated. For example, equitable distributions may make it easier to reach cooperative outcomes.

17. With these phenomena in mind, in view of the upcoming 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and with a goal of ensuring that environmental and economic stressors do not stifle people's aspirations for development or compromise the prospects and freedoms of future generations, the decision was reached with the UNDP Administrator to

focus the 2011 *Human Development* Report on the issue of equity and sustainability. More specifically, the Report will examine the urgent global challenge of sustainable development, and its relationship to inequality within and across countries. The Report will strive to deepen our understanding of those important linkages, and to identify polices that would make development both more sustainable and more equitable in the decades to come.

18. While links between inequality and unsustainability have long been recognized, much remains to be learned about the relationship between the two phenomena, and about the kinds of policies that can help ensure that development becomes both more sustainable and more equitable. The Report will pay particular attention to the world's poorest people, many of whom are concentrated in regions that have long been punished by drought, floods and other natural disasters. There is some evidence that the frequency and severity of these disasters is on the increase as a result of rising temperatures. It is also the case that these people have the least power, which only adds to the challenge of addressing the environmental, economic and political problems confronting them.

19. The 2011 Report will also update and expand country coverage of the Human Development Index and of the complementary indices that were introduced in the 2010 Report: the Inequality-adjusted HDI, the Gender Inequality Index and the Multidimensional Poverty Index. The annex to the 2011 Report will include a careful selection of sustainability indicators, capturing food security, environmental threats and vulnerability, sustainability of ecosystems and energy use.

In conclusion

20. The Executive Board recognized in its February 2011 decision that the *Human Development Report* "is an important tool for raising awareness about human development around the world." The Human Development Report Office remains committed to the tradition of promoting awareness about human capabilities, and to using its research to enrich public understanding of human development progress and challenges.

Annex

Meetings with experts, UNDP, governments and other stakeholders in the preparation of the 2011 *Human Development Report*

(As of 6 April 2011)

Event	Location	Date
Sustainability and human development organized with London School of Economics	London, United Kingdom	1 Feb 2010
Sustainability and human development in East Africa with UNEP	Nairobi, Kenya	21 July 2010
Sustainability, environment and human development organized with the HDCA	Amman, Jordan	20 Sep 2010
Sustainability, environment and human development (Mali country office)	Bamako, Mali	25 Nov 2010
Sustainability and human development in East Asia, organized with Bangkok Regional Centre	Bangkok, Thailand	8 Dec 2010
Sustaining equitable progress, organized with the Dubai School of Government	Dubai, UAE	14 Dec 2010
Sustainability and human development, organized with the United Nations Association of Germany and the German MFA	Bonn, Germany	16 Dec 2010
UNDP Management Group discussions	New York, NY	17 Jan 2011
UNDP readers' group	New York, NY	20 Jan 2011
Academic Advisory Panel	New York, NY	21 Jan 2011
Expert meeting at the University of California, Berkeley, Institute of the Environment	Berkeley, California	10 Feb 2011
UNDP readers' group	New York, NY	23 March 2011
UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee group	New York, NY	24 March 2011
Academic Advisory Panel	New York, NY	25 March 2011
Executive Board, informal briefing	New York, NY	30 March 2011
Country level expert meeting	San Jose, Costa Rica	4 April 2011
Country level expert meeting	Quito, Ecuador	11-12 April 2011
Executive Board regional groups	New York, NY	late April 2011
Sustainable Human Development in Western Balkans	Ljubljana, Slovenia	25-26 May 2011
Meeting with local experts in context of Asian and Pacific HDR discussion	New Delhi, India	27-28 April 2011
Meeting with local experts in context of Asian and Pacific HDR discussion	Beijing, China	29 April 2011
Country level expert meeting	Brasilia, Brazil	(tbc)
Discussions with civil society organizations (CSOs) attending Commission on Sustainable Development (tbd) (2-13 May)	New York, NY	May 2011
African consultation (possibly with ECA)	tbd	tbd
Review of emerging findings with UN agencies, CSOs, OECD etc	Geneva, Switzerland	16 May 2011
Review of emerging findings, particularly with respect to policy recommendations (Danish MFA hosted)	Copenhagen, Denmark	18 May 2011
UNDP Management Group discussion	New York, NY	May 2011
Executive Board, informal briefing	New York, NY	23 May 2011
Human development workshop for Gulf States	Qatar (tbd)	May or June 2011

Country level expert meeting	Tokyo, Japan	early June 2011 (tbc)
Executive Board, annual meeting	New York, NY	10 June 2011

Meetings on Statistics

Consultation with statistical agencies of countries omitted from 2010 HDI	New York, NY	22 Feb 2011
Statistics Commission discussions on HDI and indicators	New York, NY	23-24 Feb 2011
Eurostat conference "Statistics for policymaking: Europe 2020"	Brussels, Belgium	10-11 March 2011
Meeting of UNECLAC on statistics/bilateral meeting with authorities	Havana, Cuba	6-8 April 2011
Statistical Advisory Panel	New York, NY	14 April 2011
Measuring progress of societies (OECD and UNDP co-chairs)	Mexico City, Mexico	11-13 May 2011
59th plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians	Geneva, Switzerland	14-16 June 2011
Review of sustainability measurements	Kigali, Rwanda	21-24 June 2011
58th World Statistics Congress of the International Statistical Institute	Dublin, Ireland	21-26 Aug 2011
The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities	Luxembourg	Aug 2011